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## AMERICAN ART NEWS.

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Advice as to the placing at public or private sale of are works of all kinds, pictures, sculptures, furniture, bibelots, etc., will be given at the office of the AMERICAN ART NEWS, and also counsel as to the value of art works and the obtaining of the best "expert" opinion on the same. For these services a nominal fee will be charged. Persons having art works and desirous of disposing or obtaining an idea of their value, will find our service on these lines a saving of time, and, in many instances, of unnecessary expense. It is guaranteed that any opinion given will be so given without regard to personal or commercial motives.

## A HAPPY NEW YEAR.

We extend to our readers and patrons every wish for the happiest of New Year's, and it is gratifying indeed to realize on this last week end of 1913, that the clouds of depression and fear which have now, for so many weeks, so affected the art world, and especially the art business world, are lightening, and from all indications are soon to disappear. Public confidence is returning, hearts are lighter today than for three months past, and a Happy New Year can be awaited with well grounded hope of better times.

## AS TO SIGNED ART WORKS.

There continues to exist, even among accomplished art students and lovers, a decided misapprehension as to the value of artists' signatures on art works, especially on old pictures.

We are frequently called upon to pass upon old and modern art works by owners and collectors and even artists, and in the majority of cases are

informed with delight that the art work offered for inspection is "Signed", or with dejection that it is not "Signed."

It would seem as if every student of art history should know that early painters and artisans rarely signed their works, and that unscrupulous and dishonest persons, for centuries, have affixed signatures to art works, to give to them a fictitious value, and that, in fact, signatures are frequently appended to modern copies and imitations of even pictures and art works, and so cleverly as to make it difficult, if not impossible, always to detect their falsity.

Collectors, owners and art lovers should therefore know that while signatures to art or art works are sometimes confirmatory of authenticity or value, they are never conclusive.

## ART BOOK REVIEWS.

**Art and Common Sense**, by Royal Cortissoz. New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, \$1.75 net.

Mr. Cortissoz is one of the most eminent of American art critics. He has written for the New York Tribune for many years. Those who know the trials and tribulations of the writers upon the daily press—how more and more as a journal becomes a "big business," the pressure of the counting rooms makes itself felt in the editorial departments—appreciate the adroit way in which Mr. Cortissoz has acquitted himself during these many years—how firmly he has steered between the Scylla of advertising and the Charybdis of "log rolling." He has himself, as a writer, been guided by common sense, so it is not presumptuous in him to write for the public from the viewpoint of "Art and Common Sense."

Of course, however the matter of common sense and acquired sense is a relative one. Mr. Cortissoz admits in the first line of his book that, "There are some impenetrable mysteries about a great work of art." He ends his introduction with the dictum "Let prejudice and pedantry go hang Beauty is all, And is it not the enjoyment of beauty that we are driving at?" It will be readily seen that reduced to its common denominator, the problem is, Who is to decide which fellow knows a "mystery," which fellow has the "prejudice" which the "pedantry," and who knows what "beauty" is? Also the question suggests itself, Which fellow has the common sense?

Writing of the Armory Exhibition of last session on page 150, Mr. Cortissoz directs his sarcasm against those who go to an exhibition "with a solicitude 'about meaning and about life' at the expense of matters of technique"; yet are not these people the very ones who maintain they have the common sense, that it is the critic like Mr. Cortissoz who is putting on airs by presuming to know the secrets of technique beyond the ken of the layman?

A certain English poet proclaimed "Beauty is truth, truth is beauty, that is all ye need to know." This is the very stand the "Post-Impressionists" take; they would aver that it is Mr. Cortissoz who assumes a superior sense by judging them with certain preconceived laws of technique—the "hand-me-downs" of by gone ages. Common sense or acquired sense—is it not all a matter of relative terms?

**Mural Painting in America.** The Scammon Lectures delivered before the Art Institute of Chicago, March, 1912, and since greatly enlarged by Edwin Blashfield, with numerous reproductions of representative works.—New York, Charles Scribner's Sons.

Mr. Blashfield is well fitted to write upon the subject of Mural Painting in America; he has practiced the art with pronounced success for some twenty-five years, and he possesses such broad culture that he comprehends sympathetically the work of other painters who have entered the same field. The book is not, however, wholly taken up with the accomplishments of the painters, but the major part is given over to the discussion of the problems of the mural painter, his relation to his patron, and his architect, and the technical traditions of European art. On every page one feels it is the voice of practical experience speaking, not the a priori arguments of some theorist. Writing of Puvis de Chavannes, Mr. Blashfield says that the feeling and method of this famous decorator "were absolutely suited to the great gray

Panthéon, and he prepared his own surroundings in America and at the Sorbonne. When he painted his decorations for Boston he was old, near the end of his life, dreaded a sea voyage, and did not come to America. Had he done so, I am convinced," says the author, "that confronted as he would have been by yellow Siena marble instead of his beloved gray surfaces, he would have modified the tone of some of his blues."

Again, "As I have said before in writing of Franz Hals, his brush strokes are not wonderful because they are broad, but because, while broad, they are exactly the right size, shape, and tone, and are laid on in exactly the right place. No matter how handsomely you stir up your surface—if you do not know your subsurface well, somebody will see through the upper layer and find you out. If underneath you have a closely modelled study, you may strike out details, broaden planes, and your resultant breadth will look felt and finished. It will have nothing flimsy about it, but will have quality instead, and seem what it is—a solid piece of work."

**Stained Glass of the Middle Ages**, in England and France, painted by Lawrence B. Saint, described by Hugh Arnold, London. A. & C. Black, New York, The Macmillan Co., \$7.00.

In view of the fact that the light falls through the glass and not upon it, it is a difficult matter to take a photograph from a stained glass window that will be suitable for color reproduction; it was, therefore, a happy idea of the publisher to reproduce the colored drawings from windows by Lawrence B. Saint, for they give a less muddy effect than could reproductions from the windows themselves. There are fifty of these colored plates, and with the accurate text by Hugh Arnold they make up a fascinating volume of superlative interest.

**Modern Artists**, by Christian Brinton, New York, Baker & Taylor Co.

Mr. Brinton has travelled much as a journalist and makes good use of his cosmopolitan erudition in compiling this thick volume, treating of fourteen painters such as Fragonard, Böcklin, Whistler, Sargent and Zuloaga. He writes sympathetically of his subjects, and the book should be popular.

A crown octavo volume containing fifty-eight photogravure plates reproducing original paintings by Homer D. Martin is announced by Frederic Fairchild Sherman. Descriptive text is supplied by Dana H. Carrol. The histories of the works, so far as available, are given, and, in many cases, interesting information is given regarding their inception and execution.

## CORRESPONDENCE

## Houdon's Condorcet or Lavoisier.

Editor AMERICAN ART NEWS

Dear Sir:

Under the heading "Houdon bust misnamed," you say in your issue of Dec. 13 that "I am convinced" that M. Vitry's identification of the marble bust at the American Philosophical Society in this city, where it has been within six years of a Century as that of Condorcet, is correct as of Lavoisier.

Upon what authority you make the statement I do not know, for my mind is open as to whether it is Condorcet or Lavoisier. I am convinced that the marble bust at the Philosophical society is, as pointed out by M. Vitry, identical with the terra-cotta bust in the Louvre tabletted "Lavoisier." But as the bust at the Louvre came into possession of the Museum as late as 1896 and was only identified as Lavoisier by comparison with David's portrait of Lavoisier, and the bust at the Philosophical society was presented by William Short, (who was Secretary of Legation to Jefferson when Minister to France), as Condorcet, in 1819, it having been given to him in 1795 by the grand-daughter of Madame de la Rochefoucault as Condorcet, (in whose Hotel he and Jefferson had often seen it as he reminds Jefferson in his letter of presentation) to the society of which Jefferson was President, the evidence preponderates in favor of both busts being Condorcet rather than that both are Lavoisier.

The only sure way of proving the bust's identity is by the production of the bust that Houdon did make of Condorcet, which is unfortunately unknown to-day, duly verified, and comparing the two. Then only we will know if the two busts mentioned are of him, and if they are not, it will leave the identification as of Lavoisier, to the comparison with the David portrait of the great chemist, whose widow married the American Count Rumford.

Charles Henry Hart.  
Phila., Pa., Dec. 17, 1913.

## OLD MOHAMMEDAN ART SALE.

The art auction season of 1914 will be inaugurated in New York by the sale at auction at the American Art Galleries, No. 6 E. 23 St., on the afternoons of Tuesday-Friday, Jan. 6-9, inclusive, of perhaps the most remarkable collection of the art of the Orient and near Orient that has ever come up for dispersal in an American auction room.

The collection, which comprises rarely rich old weaves including some 308 15th-18th Century Persian, Caucasian, Asia Minor, Turkestan, Hispano-Moresque and Chinese rugs, representative of the very best types in each class, the finest specimens imaginable of Persian and Saracenic pottery, from the kilns of Ispahan, Koubatcha, Rhages, Rakka, and Rhodes, rare old cloth of gold brocades, Persian lacquers and jewelry, and varied Saracenic and Early European arms and armor, is to be sold to close the liquidation of the old and well-known Constantinople banking and mercantile house of O. Ogopian. It is by the order of foreign bankers, whose American representatives are Knauth, Nachod and Kuhne, Frederick McLaughlin and S. Kent-Costikyan, that the sale is to be made, and, needless to say, the event is arousing the keenest anticipations, not only in the trade, but among collectors and connoisseurs. The exhibition of the beautiful weaves and art objects which form the collection, will open at the American Art Galleries on New Year's Day, and will continue until the afternoon of the first session of the sale, Jan. 6.

## Richness and Beauty.

It is impossible to give even a faint idea of the exceeding richness and beauty of the individual specimens in this exceptional assemblage of treasures, or of its effectiveness as a whole, in an advance description, but from the reproductions of a representative rug, a painting on lacquer and some objects in this issue, and from the well written "foreword" by Mr. John Getz in the handsome catalog, which he has compiled, collectors will see that the praise above given the collection, is well founded. Its rarity and beauty will surprise even connoisseurs in that Mohammedan art which is now so greatly engaging the attention of art lovers, the world over.

## Rare Rugs of "Ind."

Mr. Getz well calls attention in his "foreword" to the really wonderful XVI century Iranian carpets from Northern Persia, which mark the climax of the early weavers' and dyers' art, especially the Ispahan court carpets, and the "Stately creations" of the Ardebil, Kurdistan, Meshed and Sehna looms, including some royal triclinal ceremonial floor panels, the exceptional prayer rugs from Asia Minor, which include remarkable Ghiordes, Kulah, Ladik and Rhodian weaves, the Caucasian Kabistan, Kuba, and Daghestan rugs, the royal Bokhara Yomud, Khiva and Tekke rugs from Turkestan and Afghan looms, and, last, but not least, the Hispano-Moresque carpets and various large Kilims of the finest quality.

"The mellowing process of time," says Mr. Getz, "wanting in more recent productions have added their shimmering lustre on many of these weaves, which also show originality of design, unequalled dexterity and patience, indeed such tranquil perseverance as nothing could have disturbed," and further declares that "a marked feature of these weaves is their untreated condition while their unique character is noticeable at a glance."

## Choice Art Objects.

The same high quality that pertains to the weaves is also to be found in the art objects. The potteries are not only without blemish, but some are unique specimens, and all have exceptional quaintness or beauty. There is a crown jewel, a ruby, emerald and sapphire ring, surrounded with small diamonds, and formerly owned by the Khedive of Egypt, and lustred plates and bowls of rare beauty.

Among the finest weaves are a 16th century antique Ispahan Court carpet of the period of Shah Abbas, 13 ft. 6 in. long by 5 ft. 7 in. wide, the long panel presenting a typical Ispahan deep rose-colored background, with a complex "All over" design of characteristic design and coloring, the details are well balanced, and the border has a floral varicolored design.

(Continued on page 6.)